KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF NURSES REGARDING TRANSGENDER HEALTH CARE- A PILOT STUDY FROM KERALA

Mrs. Veena R Nair* | Dr. Angela Gnanadurai**

**Nursing Officer, Taluk Hospital, Neendakara, Kerala, India.*

***Principal, Jubilee Mission College of Nursing, Thrissur, Kerala, India.*

DOI: http://doi.org/10.47211/idcij.2023.v10i01.001

ABSTRACT

Nurses interact with transgender patients in a variety of settings. More and more nurses wish to provide a comfortable environment for all their patients, including those who are transgender. A descriptive study to assess the knowledge and attitude of nurses regarding transgender health care is a pilot study conducted in a selected tertiary care centre in Kollam district of Kerala state. Quantitative descriptive survey is used to collect data from 30 samples selected by simple random sampling technique. Knowledge questionnaire developed by the investigator to measure knowledge and standardized 7 point attitude likert scale to measure the antitransgender prejudice was used to collect data. Majority 13 (43.3%) of samples had poor knowledge regarding treatment and nursing care of transgender patients for general and specific health care needs. Very few 2-3 (6-10%) have good knowledge. 7(23.3%) of samples have good knowledge regarding definitions related to trans-genders and their health problems. Majority of samples 15 (50%) have low anti-trans men prejudice. Only 2 (6.7%) have high anti-trans men prejudice. Majority of samples12 (40%) have low anti-trans women prejudice.

KEYWORDS: *Knowledge, transgender, patients, pilot study.*

ABOUT AUTHORS:

Author Mrs. Veena R Nair is MSc Nurse specialized in Medical Surgical Nursing (RNRM). She is a registered nurse who has 11 years of teaching experience. She is pursuing PhD in nursing from INC National Consortium. Currently she is working as a nursing officer in Taluk Hospital, Neendakara, Kerala, India.

Author Dr. Angela Gnanadurai MSN, PhD is a nurse administrator with 37 years of experience. She is currently working as Principal, Jubilee Mission College of nursing, Thrissur, Kerala, India.

INTRODUCTION

Nurses represent the largest segment of the major health workforce in any country. Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth[1]. Nurses interact with transgender patients in a variety of settings. Inpatient or outpatient, medical or surgical or psychiatric this patient population is represented and deserves appropriate care. Transgender patients have the same healthcare concerns as cisgender individuals[2]. More and more nurses wish to provide a comfortable environment for all their patients, including those who are transgender. However, this can feel challenging for nurses without a great deal of experience caring for this community, especially because they have not had adequate or appropriate educational resources[3]. The education and training of nurses in cultural humility and transgender specific health knowledge can be examined as a means to address the discrimination and stigma that is reported by transgender people in healthcare settings.[4]

A grounded theory research conducted among 268 nurses in the San Francisco Bay Area to explore practicing nurses' knowledge of the needs of transgender patients. Investigators analyzed transcripts for the semi structured interview containing a single question "Describe health care issues that are particular to transgender patients". This study identified 3 interrelated themes in nurses' responses when asked to describe the health care issues that are particular to transgender patients. These 3 themes—discomfort, transition, and harsh consequences of being transgender —all reflect the nursing environment that transgender patients likely face when they enter a health care setting where nurses are uncertain and unprepared. Although none of the respondents suggested that they would refuse care to a transgender patient, the majority of responses painted a picture of health care environments that were far from being fully accepting of and properly trained to work with transgender patients.[5]

There are very few hospitals in Kerala which extends transition related treatment for transgenders. Societal and political reforms in Kerala in the past few years helped more transgender to be visible and reveal their identity. Hence number of transgender people seeking health care for both general and specific health issues increased to a considerable rate. Nurses working in the mainstream come across more transgender patients and situation demands more interaction with them. Nurses' knowledge and attitude about transgenders play a vital role in delivering gender affirmative care. Very unfortunately nursing curriculum hardly address content about transgender health care. The nursing literature is mostly silent on nursing care of transgender patients, which contributes to considerable confusion, lack of knowledge, and uncertainty about how to interact with transgender patients and their families and also more concerns in implementing nursing procedures like history collection, physical assessment and urinary catheterization. There is no published research data on nurses' knowledge and attitude about transgender patients in Kerala or even in India.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross- sectional, hospital based pilot study was conducted to assess knowledge of nurses regarding transgender health care and their attitude towards transgender in a selected tertiary care centre in Kollam district of Kerala state. 30 nurses enrolled in the study by using a simple random sampling technique. Variable under study was knowledge of nurses regarding transgender health care and their attitude towards transgender. Data was gathered through face-to-face interviews questionnaire which composed of two sections: demographic data and knowledge of nurses regarding transgender health care. Demographic data included gender, educational qualification, years of experience and previous classes on transgender during student period. Knowledge questionnaire included 25 multiple choice questions from three main dimensions – knowledge regarding definitions and health problems of transgenders, treatment available for general and specific health needs and nursing care of transgender patients. Attitude towards transgenders were measured using 7 point likert scale developed by Thomas J Billiard (ATTMW- attitude towards trans men and trans women) which has two sub scales each containing 12 items measuring antitransgender prejudice towards transmen and transwomen separately. Data was analyzed by a computerized program (SPSS) version 20 and presented in the form of simple frequency table and cross table to explore the relationship between variables. P value = 0.05 was considered statistically significant. Ethical approval was obtained from ethical committees and administrative authorities of hospital.

RESULTS

Table (1) Frequency and percentage samples based on socio personal (n=30)

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	28	93.3
Male	2	6.6
Professional qualification		
GNM	9	30
BSc	18	60
MSc	3	10
Years of experience		
<1 year	4	13.3
1-5 years	16	53.3
5-10 years	4	13..3
>10 years	6	20
Attended classes on transgenders during student period		
Yes	2	6.6
No	28	93.3

Table (2): Nurses` level of knowledge regarding transgender health care (n=30)

Dimensions	Knowledge Level					
	Poor		Average		Good	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Definition and health problems of transgenders	12	40	11	36.7	7	23.3
Treatment or general and specific health needs	13	43.3	15	50.7	2	6
Nursing care for transgender people	13	43.3	14	46.7	3	10

Majority 13 (43.3%) of samples had poor knowledge regarding treatment and nursing care of transgender patients for general and specific health care needs. Very few 2-3 (6-10%) have good knowledge.7 (23.3%) of samples have good knowledge regarding definitions related to trans-genders and their health problems.

Table (3): Nurses' attitude towards transmen (n=30)

Attitude level	Frequency	Percent
Low	15	50
Medium	13	43.3
High	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Majority of samples 15 (50%) have low anti-trans men prejudice. Only 2 (6.7%) have high anti-trans men prejudice.

Table (4): Nurses' attitude towards transwomen (n=30)

Attitude level	Frequency	Percent
Low	12	40
Medium	13	3.3
High	5	16.6
Total	30	100.0

Majority of samples 12 (40%) have low anti-trans women prejudice. 5(16.6%) have high anti-trans women prejudice.

DISCUSSION

Present study reveals that majority of practicing nurses in Kerala has poor knowledge regarding transgender health care. There are limited existing theory and research to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under study. No available literature gives a quantified data on knowledge of nurses regarding transgender health care. There are few qualitative research data on the nurses' knowledge regarding transgender health care. One such study identified knowledge gaps like patients have to teach providers, lack of resources on transgender care and transgender care not as a part of curricula[9]. Qualitative data available from western world [10] in conjunction with the present study findings throw light to the need for education and training for nurses on transgender care.[6]

Analysis of ATTMW revealed that anti-trans women prejudice was high in 5 (16.6%) of samples when only2 (6.7%) of them have high anti-trans men prejudice. This it shows the gender discriminative attitude of the society. Transmen are better accepted when compared to transwomen according to the current study. But on the whole most of the study participants have either low or medium anti transgender prejudice. That shows their increased acceptance of the third gender.

A survey presented at the association of nurses on AIDS care conference in Portland found that nurses who expressed interest in transgender care believe that transgender people have value and are willing to take care of transgender patients. However the survey also revealed that a small number of nurses would not be fully comfortable with transgender clients on interpersonal level and some had mixed belief about sex gender paradigms[7]

There were several questions and concerns expressed by practicing nurses while the investigator approached them for data collection. Most significant ones include "Do they pretend to be the other gender"? "Do they have ambiguous genitalia?" "I have concerns regarding talking to them in a sensitive manner and also to approach them to do any nursing procedures like urinary catheterization".

CONCLUSION

Practicing nurses have poor knowledge regarding transgender health care even though most of them have low antitransgender prejudice. The study need to be replicated in larger samples and also qualitative data need to be collected in various domain to get more clarity regarding the feelings and experiences of nurses while they take care of transgender patients.

REFERENCES

1. Reisner SL, Poteat T, Keatley J, Cabral M, Mothopeng T, Dunham E, Holland CE, Max R, Baral SD. Global health burden and needs of transgender populations: a review. Lancet. 2016 Jul 23; 388 (10042):412-436. [internet][Cited 2016 June 17th] Available from. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7035595/.
2. Reisner S A. Meeting health care needs of transgender patients. . [internet] New York. Fenway Institute. [2020 July]. Available from https://www.lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/Sari-slides_final1.pdf
3. Geehan A. Nursing care for transgender patients: tips and resources. Nurse journal. [internet] [2022 Aug 29th]. Available from https://nursejournal.org/resources/nursing-care-for-transgender-patients/
4. V. Hughes, S. Delva, M. Nkimbeng, E. Spaulding, R.A. Turkeson – Ocran J, Ford A, Rushton C. Not missing the opportunity: strategies to promote cultural humility among future nursing faculty. J Prof Nurs, 3 (1), 2020. 28-33 Available from 10.1016/j.profnurs.2019.06.005
5. Carabez RM, Eliason MJ, Martinson M. Nurses. Knowledge about transgender patient care: a qualitative study. *ANS Adv Nurs Sci*. 2016; 39(3):257-271. doi:10.1097/ANS.000000 0000000128.
6. Sukumar S, Ullatil V, Asokan A. Transgender health care status in Kerala. Indian J Endocr Metab 2020; 24:2. [internet][Cited 2021 Sep 12nd] Available from doi: 10.4103/ijem.IJEM_146_20
7. Kerala: soon, protocols or surgery for gender reassignment. Times of India. [internet][Cited 2021 July 27th] available from https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/soon-protocols-for-surgery-of-gender-reassignment/articleshow/84774977.cms
8. Mckay M, De Santis J, Valdes B, Salani D. Prelicensure Baccalaureate Nursing Students' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Willingness to Care for Transgender Clients. J Nurs Educ. 2022 Jun;61(6):322-325 [internet][2022 Jun 1st] Available from doi: 10.3928/01484834-20220404-10
9. Paradiso C, Lally RM. Nurse Practitioner Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs When Caring for Transgender People. Transgend Health. 2018 Apr 1;3(1):47-56. [internet][Cited 2018 Apr 26th] Available from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5926473/
10. Carabez RM, Eliason MJ, Martinson M. Nurses' Knowledge About Transgender Patient Care: A Qualitative Study. ANS Adv Nurs Sci. 2016 Jul-Sep;39(3):257-71. . [internet][2017 Mar 9th] Available from https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27490881/